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GOLDWATER DENIES HE REBUKED HELMS

Arizonan Says Warning Letter Wasn't Tied to Disclosure of C.I.A. and Salvador

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 20 — Sen. Barry Goldwater, the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, has denied that he rebuked Sen. Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, for issuing classified information without authorization.

Senator Goldwater and Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the vice chairman of the intelligence committee, sent a letter last week asking the Senate leadership to remind colleagues that disclosure of confidential information violates Senate rules. It is punishable by reprimand, censure or even expulsion.

According to two Senators and two Senate aides who have seen the document, the letter cited a speech two weeks ago by Senator Helms on the Senate floor in which he disclosed the Central Intelligence Agency's involvement in the Salvadoran presidential elections.

Senator Helms, who is locked in a tight re-election race in his home state, has said that his speech on the C.I.A. was drawn from sources in El Salvador, not the intelligence committee or classified material.

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The Senate majority leaders pointed out, in a letter sent Thursday, that it was a violation of Senate rules to disclose intelligence information from any source without first obtaining the approval of the intelligence committee. The reason, they said, was that the intelligence committee could well be studying the same intelligence information that a Senator could obtain from other sources.

Senator Goldwater, in a series of interviews with North Carolina newspapers published this weekend, said the letter to the leadership was spurred by the release of information by a number of Senators.

"Jesse's involvement in this thing was just coincidental," Senator Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, was quoted as telling The Winston-Salem Journal. "He happened to make his speech about the same time we decided to write our letter."

He added: "The question asked is, did Helm's statements precipitate the writing of the letter? The answer is no."

The letter has not been made public. Senator Moynihan was not available for comment.

Senator Goldwater said he doubted that the Senate would take any action punishing Senator Helms.

In a separate interview with The Raleigh News and Observer, Senator Goldwater also said that "nobody has rebuked him."

In his Senate speech, Mr. Helms charged the C.I.A. had provided "across the board services" including money for precinct organizers, radio and television advertisements and computer voter registration.

Administration officials later confirmed that the C.I.A. gave more than $1.4 million to two political parties.

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